

98-84369-26

Davitt, Michael

The land league proposal

Glasgow

[1882]

98-84369-26

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THE

AND LEAGUE PROPOSAL:

A STATEMENT FOR HONEST AND
THOUGHTFUL MEN.

BY

MICHAEL DAVITT.

PRINTED FOR GRATUITOUS CIRCULATION BY THE AUTHOR.

GLASGOW:

CAMERON & FERGUSON, 88 WEST NILE STREET.

LONDON: 4 SALISBURY COURT, FLEET STREET.

THE LAND LEAGUE PROPOSAL.

*Address delivered in the Free Trade Hall, Manchester, on
21st May, 1882.*

THE duties of a Chairman upon occasions like this are ordinarily of a trivial character. To introduce the lecturer, preserve order, and submit to the penalty of a vote of thanks for not occupying too much of the attention of the audience, is generally the routine of a Chairman's duty. I would, however, be underrating the importance of this vast meeting, and neglecting a duty which I owe to the interests of justice and to the cause of peace, if, in face of the present crisis, I should hesitate to inflict myself upon your attention for a longer period than is convenient to myself or perhaps agreeable to you. To my friend, Mr George, I feel certain I need not apologise for trespassing upon his time and subject, and I am in hopes that my motives in dealing with the various intensified phases of the present situation will be appreciated by you to the extension of an indulgent hearing.

The change that has come over public opinion upon the subject of Land Reform during my incarceration in Portland is so vast in its import to the cause with which I am identified that I am, I hope, pardonably anxious to justify the movement by the aid of which such a revolution in the popular mind of these countries has been effected. (Cheers.) Three years ago, when the cry of the "Land for the people" went up from a meeting in the west of Ireland, it was received with astonishment by our own countrymen, and branded at once as communistic and wicked in England. Yet an organisation for effecting the nationalisation of the land of this country is now numbered among its political forces, and has at its head such enlightened minds as Drs Russell Wallace and Clark. (Cheers.)

Peasant proprietary was ridiculed as ruinous and impossible by the late Lord Beaconsfield. (Hisses.) No, no; I must say I don't approve of that. (Cheers.) I never carry resentment into

the tomb. (Cheers.) He was our enemy while alive, but we must be just to his memory—(cheers)—and when we show mankind that we have learned the lesson of knowing how to be just, we shall prove that we deserve to be free. (Cheers.) He propounded his famous theory that three profits must necessarily be recognised in the agriculture of England, those of the landlord, the farmer, and the labourer; yet scarcely has his cloak of leadership fallen upon Lord Salisbury than the landlord's profit is recognised as an evil in the rural economy of the land, and peasant proprietary finds a lodgement in the legislative programme of the English House of Lords. Those who believed with myself that peasant proprietary, immensely preferable though it be to landlordism, would not meet to the full the final solution of the Irish social problem, were two short years ago put down as Utopian dreamers, yet one of the most respected Bishops of Ireland has since proclaimed that "the land of every country is the common property of the people of that country—(cheers)—because its real Owner—the Creator who made it—has transferred it as a voluntary gift to them. *Terram autem dedit filiiis hominum.* (The earth He hath given to the children of men.) Now, as every individual, in every country, is a creature and a child of God, and as all His creatures are equal in His sight, any settlement of the land of this or any other country that would exclude the humblest man in this or that country from his share of the common inheritance, would not only be an injustice and a wrong to that man, but would, moreover, be an iniquitous resistance to the benevolent intentions of his Creator." (Loud cheers.)

All these vast strides, taken in conjunction with Mr Gladstone's legislation of the past and present year, ought to show, to every observing mind, that a movement from which such progress in economic thought has mainly sprung should not be lightly treated or hastily condemned because a storm of angry passions, inseparable from human struggles, has swept over an unfortunate country as a cotemporary phenomenon. (Cheers.) If movements for the social and political amelioration of a people are to be held responsible for the crimes that are incidental, not to them, but to the wrongs which they strive to abolish, liberty itself would be a blood-stained monster, and the cause of society progress be a criminal pursuit. No one laments the murders and outrages that have taken place in Ireland recently more than I do—(hear, hear)—and no one will be found more ready or earnest to prevent them in future; but to charge their perpetration upon the Land League movement, as most English papers are doing, is as blindly

unjust as to bring home to the French Reformers of 1789 the atrocities of the Reign of Terror, and fasten upon the memory of Mirabeau the sanguinary appetite of a Marat. (Cheers.)

Knowing that if a fair hearing could be obtained in England for a reformer it would be granted in Manchester—(cheers)—the birthplace of English reform, I have come to plead the cause of the Land League upon ground that is hallowed by the blood of Englishmen—(cheers)—spilled in the cause of justice and progress. (Cheers.) My object will be to show that to a tardy recognition of principles by English statesmanship, and an indifference towards, or hostility to, the just demands of the people of Ireland on the part of English popular feeling, are to be attributed the excesses that follow from justice long delayed, and crying evils allowed to pander to the dictates of unreasoning passion. Every one who is acquainted with the political career of John Bright—(some hisses)—and who has read the speeches of other English Liberal leaders, is familiar with the tone of scornful upbraiding with which, not they alone, but all the organs of the Liberal party, have assailed the Tories for their persistent opposition to all the great English reforms that have been carried from 1832 down to the Ballot Act of 1874. English Conservatism has been over and over again charged with initiating nothing for the national weal, and taunted with having obstructed all popular measures until success had placed them among the statutes of the realm. This hostility of the Tories towards the extension of popular privileges, as defined by their political rivals, is exactly similar to that of the people of England towards movements and measures in behalf of popular rights in Ireland. Neither English statesmen nor English public opinion ever trouble themselves to think of, propose, or initiate any legislative remedy for the wants and grievances that affect the wellbeing and contentment of the people of Ireland, but take up, as a general rule, towards such remedies as Irishmen propose and Irish public opinion endorses, the same antagonistic stand as that which is so loudly condemned when assumed by one English party towards the plans and proposals of the other. Thus every single Irish proposal for measures essential to our country's needs has to encounter two hostile Conservative forces ere it can hope for lodgement within the domain of practical politics—namely, the hereditary or aristocratic in Great Britain and Ireland, and the ignorant or prejudiced on the part of the popular mind of England. (Hear, hear.) Hence not a single remedial Act passed, or remnant of penal laws removed, from the passage of the Act

of Union until the Arrears Bill now before the House of Commons, but has had to be forced down the throat of English public opinion and Parliament by the intensity of Irish agitation. (Cheers.)

The parallel, however, between the hostility of English Toryism towards popular rights in this country and that of English popular feeling against the recognition of identical principles in Ireland, would only be complete if the Conservative party had had the power to have suspended the Habeas Corpus Act preparatory to the concession of some remedy for English discontent, and had likewise imprisoned such of the Liberal leaders as were chiefly instrumental in forcing such remedy upon reluctant legislation. (Laughter and cheers.)

The question I would like to ask of Englishmen, who are now compelled to study the problem of Ireland's pacification, is a simple and practical one. Is landlordism worth what its support is costing England—"no"—and the troubles and misery which it is entailing upon Ireland? ("No," and cheers.) No rational mind acquainted with the treasure of blood and money that has been wasted in defending it against the assaults of its victims would hesitate a single moment for a reply to this simple question. The only grounds upon which anything like a reasonable defence of this anti-Irish and irrational system can be based are that it is English, that it has always been deemed essential to the maintenance of England's power in Ireland, and that those whose interests would be affected by its abolition are the portion of the population of Ireland that is known to be the most loyal to the authority of England. Surely these reasons ought not to outweigh those which can be advanced by Irishmen, and which are supported by unprejudiced English thought upon the other side.

That the Irish land code is of English origin is true; but does this fact necessarily constitute it a good code, or one suited to the genius, customs, and wants of the Irish people? (Hear, hear.) These land laws are notoriously unsuited to the requirements of a progressive age, and have consequently been, in a great measure, swept away in every civilised country outside of Great Britain and Ireland. But had not this been the case, and were they still capable of being pointed to as suiting the feelings and social condition of one or more civilised nations, this would be no argument for their continuance in Ireland in face of their career of disastrous failure in that country, and in opposition to the interests and will of the Irish people. (Loud cheers.)

The assertion that landlordism is essential to the supremacy of English authority in Ireland, that it constitutes "the garrison" by

which the country is held in subjection, is one of those popular English fallacies which only needs to be examined in order to be thoroughly exploded. Its origin is easily traceable to those who find security from the consequences of their treatment of the peasantry of Ireland in proportion to the extent of credit that it obtains in the English mind. If the landlords of Ireland were the only moral or physical power for the upholding of England's authority in that country, about how long could our people be kept in subjection to their rule? Not for a single day—(cheers)—and as it is well known that an army of 30,000 troops and a military police force of over 12,000 men are deemed necessary to defend the property of the landlords, it would be a waste of words to refute the assertion that Irish landlordism is the safeguard of England's supremacy in Ireland. (Cheers.)

Of all the institutions or laws bearing an English complexion in Ireland, and making a part of the machinery by which it is governed, landlordism presents the weakest points of attack, has always been, and must always continue to be, the most obnoxious factor of English rule, and would alone, in the absence of every other exasperating agency, keep the country in an unsettled state, fan the flame of social discontent, and inspire a national sentiment of disaffection towards the power that could sustain such a notoriously ruinous system. Instead of being England's stronghold, it is just the reverse, as it renders the name and authority of English government responsible for all the injuries which it inflicts upon the country, and necessarily involves in the infamy of its acts the name of that power whose instruments are essential to their perpetration. (Cheers.)

The next argument that is adduced to sanction the support given by Englishmen to Irish landlordism is calculated to appeal even more strongly to popular feeling in this country than that just mentioned, as it is made to represent a loyal section of the population of Ireland as occupying an isolated situation in the midst of a disloyal majority, and in need of a protection which would not be required but for such loyalty. This is one of the trump cards of the Irish landlords, and has always been played in a most effective manner by them. But is it a true or honest argument? It is quite true that they constitute what is known as the loyal section of the Irish people, because they hold the land that was formerly the property of the Irish nation. (Cheers.) They could not be otherwise than loyal and grateful towards the power that guarantees them in its possession, and places in their unscrupulous hands as well the entire government of the country and

the administration of the law—(hear, hear)—but would their boasted loyalty stand the test of a Government confiscation such as those by which the land was stolen from the people in the reigns of Elizabeth, James, and Cromwell? (Cries of "No.") They are loyal because it is their interest to be so—(cheers)—and they know as well as their persecuted tenantry could tell them that the laws by which they have succeeded in reducing Ireland to beggary and chronic discontent are detested, not because those in whose interests they are maintained are loyal to England, but from the fact of their being the root of every social evil under which the country is groaning, and the chief source of the poverty and misery that burden the lives of our people. (Cheers.)

Let me ask fair-minded Englishmen whether the selfish loyalty of a class is a justification for upholding a system which constantly invites twenty times its number to be discontented? (Cries of "No.") Can a boasted attachment to English rule be construed into a privilege of pauperising an Irish nation? (Never.) Let England by all means sustain what is just and wise to defend in the interests of her Irish ultra-loyalists, but let not Englishmen endeavour to perpetuate by all the influence and power of the empire an antiquated and obnoxious land code that stands forth to-day before the world with a record of centuries of failure unequalled by any institution that has ever fallen before the attacks of progress and enlightenment. (Cheers.) Such a policy is as unjust to the social well-being of the country as it is impolitic and ruinous to the popularity of English government, and should never be persisted in by a nation that claims to rule its dependencies in accordance with popular principles and in the spirit of constitutional law. A persistency in adhering to laws or institutions that are associated with certain phases of English conquest, but which time and the march of ideas prove not only to be no longer suited to society wants, but a positive evil in a progressive age, has been the source of not a few calamities to the cause of the British empire, involving the prestige and name of England in more than one defeat and disgrace. If blind Conservative stubbornness will continue to disregard the consequences that have invariably followed from unbending opposition to the just and popular demands of a people, the continuance of Irish landlordism by English statesmen may prove a more costly blunder on this side of the Atlantic than did the imposition of unpopular taxes a century ago upon the then British colonies on the other side. (Prolonged cheers.)

Considered from a purely political point of view, Irish landlordism is, perhaps, a greater failure than in any other respect. If its baneful influence upon the social economy of Ireland has been marked with general ruin to that country, its effects upon the attitude of the Irish people towards English law and supremacy—the support of which was contemplated as the chief end of landlordism when introduced into Ireland—have been scarcely less emphatic in their results. A system that is made to supplant another belonging to a subjugated people must possess two qualities that are essential to the permanency of all institutions substituted for those that are abrogated by a dominant power. It must equal or surpass in utility or popularity that with which the people upon whom it is imposed were familiar; or it must possess sufficient inherent force to command that respect or attachment which its shortcomings or unpopularity would fail to elicit. Wanting in the quality of intrinsic merit or favourable comparison with a superseded system in the estimation of those whose interests are at stake, the new code must necessarily be defective; deficient as well in the power to enforce its behests, it becomes a complete failure. Tried by these tests, how does Irish landlordism stand as a political institution? Instead of reconciling the people of Ireland to the loss of the national system which obtained among them for centuries previous to the English invasion, or winning them over to a willing acceptance of the new law, and to a submission to the power that upheld it, landlordism has had to sustain itself by every weapon of despotic power against an incessant agrarian war from its very inception in Ireland until the present hour. (Cheers.) Never has landlordism succeeded in obtaining a moral recognition from the Irish people. (Cries of "It never will," and cheers.) Not for a single day has the Irishman ceased, to look upon the landlord as a social enemy, or the law by which he was compelled to part with most of his earnings in the shape of rent, but as the detested instrument by which himself and family are impoverished and his country ruined. Illustration or evidence is unnecessary to sustain these assertions, as they are patent to all who have given the most cursory study to the Irish Land question, and stand uncontradicted by every English writer who has brought an impartial criticism to its investigation. As for the force by which Irish landlordism might retrieve its moral debasement in the opinions of our people, I have already shown, what is patent to all the world, that this politico-social system needs the constant guardianship of 12,000 military police and an army of over 30,000 soldiers to protect its very existence, and

without the aid of which external power, as has been truly remarked by an English writer, "the property of the landlords of Ireland would not be worth a month's purchase."

I have endeavoured, in the foregoing remarks, to place this question of the abolition of Irish landlordism before the English people, not from a purely Irish point of view or upon grounds of abstract justice, but in the light of a reform involving serious English interests—proving that such interests are endangered infinitely more by the upholding of Irish landlordism than they could possibly be by its abolition. It is for Englishmen to make up their mind what course to pursue in furtherance of their own political interests. The people of Ireland have fully made up theirs—(loud cheers)—as to what is their just demand, and what the sentence that must be passed upon Irish landlordism. (Renewed cheers.) Mr Gladstone's—(hisses and cheers)—I know there is a great deal, or rather it is considered by some that there is a great deal, in a hiss, but I for one never practise what I think is reprehensible—to hiss or attack a man not present to defend himself—"hear, hear," and cheers)—Mr Gladstone's—(renewed cheers)—temporary expedient of fixing rent, backed by the undisguised despotism with which he means to combat Irish Land reformers, may satisfy some and frighten other Irishmen from further efforts to effect a complete settlement of the Irish social problem; but he deceives himself egregiously—(hear, hear)—if he believes that the Land League movement is about to efface itself all the world over because he has been converted to Mr Parnell's views upon the Arrears question—(prolonged cheers)—and accepted the services of a Mr O'Shea in effecting the treaty of Kilmainham. (Laughter.) I think it well to just remind the jubilant Whigs who believe they have captured the whole Irish party through the diplomacy of a political go-between from Clare—(renewed laughter)—that the Land League movement was organised to effect the complete abolition of Irish landlordism—(cheers)—and that until that work is fully and completely accomplished there can be no alliance between the people of Ireland and the Whig party in this country. (Cheers.) Mr Gladstone wants Ireland to give a trial to his second attempt to settle the Irish Land question. The people of Ireland will refuse to give any further trial to Irish landlordism. (Cheers.) Instead of having grappled with this festering social cancer in a courageous and effective manner, which his previous failure to cure the evil would reasonably warrant, he has proceeded upon the lines of his former mistake, and produced another experimental measure by

which landlord and tenant, instead of being legally divorced, are both turned over into the hands of the lawyers, the country invited to place all its prospects of peace and prosperity in universal litigation, while the tenant farmers are asked to see their interests protected, and their happiness insured, in the existence of a Land Court composed of lawyers and Irish land agents. The spider inviting the fly into his net—(laughter and cheers)—is only equalled in seductive disinterestedness by Mr Gladstone introducing the Irish tenant farmers into a mixed gang of Irish "conservators of ancient barbarism" and Irish agents in order to be protected! (Laughter.) Even this much of legislation, small as it is, could not be given to Ireland without being spiced with the customary vindictiveness by which Irishmen are deprived of their liberty and their country flooded with troops, because the Whig party has been put to the inconvenience of attempting something for Ireland.

Those whose complete vindication from the charges of their enemies is established by an enactment in the direction of the remedy which they called upon the people of Ireland to demand, are, nevertheless, flung into prison to gratify the vengeance of the Irish landlords; yet Englishmen marvel why there is disrespect for law and order in Ireland. English statesmen and the instruments of alien rule in that country have never failed in showing our people a way in which to violate their own laws, and it appears supremely ridiculous to find fault with and punish our people for profiting by the example of their rulers. (Cheers.)

It has ever been, and is still, the fate of English Ministers never to know how to remedy any of our admitted wrongs by what are termed "instalments of justice" in a politic or conciliatory manner. Our people must be driven either to open attempts at rebellion, or Ireland be plunged into a ferment of political agitation, ere British statesmanship will admit that such wrongs, or the questions that embrace them, come within the domain of practical politics. But that is not all. Before these recognised grievances can be partially or wholly redressed, or a modicum of justice conceded, the *Habens Corpus* Act must be suspended in order that Dublin Castle may be propitiated by an equivalent instalment of political vengeance. Thus the credit which could be gained from a not ungrateful people by a judicious treatment of the social and political wants of our country is lost to England through the vindictive spirit by which her concessions are accompanied to a sensitive and impulsive nation. The concession upon the Arrears question is now offered side by side with

a bill purporting to be aimed at secret societies and for the prevention of crime—(loud hisses)—but in reality intended to arrest the further public action of the people of Ireland towards the abolition of landlordism. Here, in the face of the most propitious hour that has presented itself to English statesmanship during the past eighty years for an effective settlement of the Irish difficulty, the fatal dual policy of the past is again resorted to, and outrage upon liberty, personal and political, is flung like a brand into Ireland, to excite again the angry passions which lead to lawlessness and crime. I am confident that if the healthy feeling of horror which was created throughout Ireland by the Phoenix Park tragedy was permitted to have its full effect upon the popular mind of the country, assassination would have been assassinated in Ireland by the melancholy event of the 6th of May. Now the country will see the use that Mr Gladstone is about to make of that event. (A voice: "No.") The Land League movement is to be crushed. (Cries of "Never," and cheers.) Every barrier that could stand between the people and landlord vengeance is to be removed in order that no political action in Ireland shall interfere with the subtle policy of the Whig Government in support of a doomed system. What will be the consequence? The people of Ireland can never place confidence in any English Government—(hear, hear)—that places the administration of its laws in the hands of Dublin Castle—(hear, hear)—that depot of centralised despotism—(loud cheers)—without a parallel in the history of constitutional government. Those in whom they have reposed confidence, to whom they look for guidance and support, are menaced with gagging laws, the very discussion of which in the English House of Commons has brought shame to the face of thousands of Englishmen.

What will be the consequence? The field of Irish political strife will be left clear to the landlords, armed with unlimited power by Mr Gladstone, and the equally unlimited power of secret combination, freed from the antagonism and rivalry of an open movement. To which of these two powers will the victims of Irish landlordism—those who know the implacable nature of landlord vengeance so well—secretly incline? I will answer this question in memorable words once uttered by John Bright: "When law refuses its duty, when Government denies the right of a people, when competition is so fierce for the little land which the monopolists grant to cultivation in Ireland, when, in fact, for a bare potato millions are scrambling, these people are driven back from law and the usages of civilisation to that which is

termed the law of nature, and if not the strongest, the law of the vindictive; and in this case the people of Ireland believe, to my certain knowledge, that it is only by these acts of vengeance, periodically committed, that they can hold in suspense the arm of the proprietor and the agent—(hear, hear)—who, in too many cases, if he dared, would exterminate them. At this moment there is a state of war in Ireland. Don't let us disguise it from ourselves. There is a war between landlord and tenant; a war as fierce, as relentless, as though it were carried on by force of arms. There is a suspicion, too, between landlord and tenant, which is not known between any class of people in this country, and there is a hatred, too, which, I believe, under the present and past system, has been pursued in Ireland, which can never be healed or eradicated." These expressions of John Bright's, years ago, face to face with a similar state of affairs in Ireland as that which confronts us now, I bring forward to show to Mr Gladstone and the English people what will be the consequences of this battle of vengeance that is going to commence between the landlords of Ireland and a great portion of the people of Ireland. In presence of this state of affairs in Ireland, vengeance is to be pitted against vengeance, the settlement of the agrarian war is to be left between the Clifford Lloyds—(loud hooting)—and the wild justice of revenge born of landlord oppression. I again ask, what will be the consequence? Had Mr Gladstone been in the confidence of the secret powers with which he pretends alone to grapple he could not have more completely played into their hands. It is only when a people despair of justice at the hands of their rulers, and see their hereditary enemies unopposed by any protective movement, that occult agencies are looked upon with favour by such people, and that the sympathies of the injured are extended to those who avenge the wrongs that are inflicted in the name of law. There is no power at the disposal of Mr Gladstone, there is no method short of the extermination of the whole Irish race, that can grapple effectually with a secret movement when it is made to appear as the only protector of a wronged and trampled people—(loud cheers)—and which confronts the mandates of unlimited despotism with the weapon of retaliation.

If the Land League is to be prevented from succouring the evicted, if every channel of political effort not favourable to Whig legislation on the land question is to be closed up, then, indeed, will the whole situation be surrendered to the secret movement, and *lex talionis* become the only refuge of despair. As the moral responsibility of the outrage epidemic of the past twelve months

must, in my humble opinion, rest upon the Whig Administration for its coercive incitation to vengeance, so must the crimes that will follow additional coercion be placed at the same door. If Mr Gladstone is earnest in his efforts to put down crime, let him go to the source of all agrarian outrage, and remove Irish landlordism from Ireland. (Cheers.) If he be determined to put down secret societies, let him remove from the government of Ireland what makes English rule detested and English law distrusted—let him sweep away Dublin Castle—(loud cheers)—and show that he can repose the same confidence in Ireland that has not been abused in Canada. (Cheers.) If he believes that peace will be restored in Ireland while landlords have power to evict and the Castle power to trample upon every political opponent and every vestige of liberty, he has read the history of the Anglo-Irish difficulty to no purpose. As well might the doctor dream of restoring to health and vigour a patient in whose sensitive flesh the instrument that made the wound lies unremoved. I believe the admirable temper and manly self-control that has distinguished almost the whole of this country during the past fortnight, in face of what might have provoked an outburst of unjust and ungenerous wrath, together with the wide-spread anxiety that peace should be restored to Ireland and crime extinguished by generous and just legislation, would sanction measures of justice and conciliation which the past would not contemplate, and which the future, if embittered by angry passions and violence, may refuse to consider. Has Mr Gladstone the courage to respond to this feeling among the unprejudiced of his countrymen, and to make an heroic concession to justice and right; or will he continue, as in the new Coercion Bill, to be guided by the policy of a Forster—(loud hisses)—and the tactics of political adversaries? It would be vain for me to think that he would be guided in his actions by a man like myself. But humble and obscure though my origin and position may be—(prolonged cheers)—the son of an Irish peasant—(cheers)—who was refused shelter in an Irish workhouse by Irish landlordism; the son of an Irish mother who had to beg through the streets of England for bread for me—humble as that origin may be, the memory of that mother has made me swear that so long as I have tongue to speak, or head to plan, or hand to dare for Ireland—(cheers, during which a great part of the audience rose and applauded vociferously)—Irish landlordism and English misgovernment in Ireland shall find in me a sleepless and incessant opponent. (Renewed cheers.)

It is useless to think that Mr Gladstone would be influenced

by my advice, but had my voice been listened to when I last emerged from the prison into which his Government thrust me in 1870—(shame)—the sad history of the past two years would never have to be written, and the Ireland of to-day might have been otherwise than a standing reproach to English government. I tell him now, that, although the Arrears Bill may land his Government over a temporary difficulty, the very next season of scarcity or partial famine that unpropitious seasons will bring upon Ireland, will re-open the Irish Land question, and call into play the same passions and provoke the same strife between conflicting interests that have brought the Land League into existence and forced the hands of unwilling legislation. If he persists in dealing only with the Irish social problem as intensified by the Land League agitation, instead of grappling with it as Irish Land reformers propose in connection with a train of retrospective ruin, present discontent, and the certainty of landlordism continuing to move in a circle of reproductive wrong, he will bequeath the settlement of the Irish Land war to the future, and leave the primary cause of Irish poverty, disaffection, crime, and misery to the country he is anxious should look to him as its friend.

Dark as is the present outlook for Ireland, I do not despair. (Hear, hear.) In a period of unexampled trial, the attitude of her people has been steadfast, courageous, and unbroken. The march of the social has dragged the settlement of the national question in its wake. If victory has not yet crowned the efforts of the Land League, we have called into existence the elements of proximate success. (Cheers.) From every prison in Ireland voices will go forth to teach the oft-repeated lesson that force is no remedy—(cheers)—against a cause which rests for support and sanction upon the ordinances of God and the dictates of justice and reason. Every parish in Ireland will have one or more in its midst that has suffered in the cause of liberty and fatherland; and from this outcrop of national sentiment, from men unjustly punished, women imprisoned—(shame)—and children indoctrinated in the creed of patriotism and social rights, will spring a generation before whose might no wrong can stand, and from whose birthland every vestige of social and political servitude must fall, as falls the withered leaves of autumn before the angry blasts of winter. (Cheers.)

Ere concluding what I fear has been a too lengthy speech—"No, no"—I feel compelled to make a few observations upon a subject which, of all others that are discussed in connection with the present state of Ireland, is the most painful to dwell upon.

The outrages that have been committed during the past year in Ireland, culminating in the assassinations of the 6th of May, 1882, have placed the character of our country in a very odious light before public opinion throughout the world. The prejudice that has been thus excited against our cause will not permit of that calm and dispassionate inquiry which would trace to the primary source of all agrarian crime what our enemies have endeavoured to fasten upon a movement that has aimed at the removal of the one grand incentive to murder and revenge. It was in vain that over and over again it was pointed out that if the leaders of the people were deprived of liberty and evictions allowed to proceed, fierce passions would be evoked, and a spirit of evil unchained, throughout Ireland. The sanguinary record of the past twelve months is the sad fulfilment of these predictions. But who or what has suffered in consequence of such crimes? Apart from the obloquy which they are made to bring upon our country, they, and they alone, are responsible for the check that has been given to the Land League movement, and for the crisis with which we are now confronted. Granting all that can be said on the head of provocation—all that can be quoted to show that the balance of crime and outrage has ever been on the side of our oppressors in the past—when will we learn the lesson which common sense and prudence teach, that the one grand fatal error in all popular movements is to allow the promptings of individual passion to silence the warnings of moral sense and prudence in order to seek a selfish and criminal gratification, regardless of all consequences to a people's cause? (Hear, hear.) Are there not far nobler principles and more exalted and manly aspirations bequeathed to us from the past than those of hatred and revenge? If the powers on high seem indifferent to interfere in the defence of right, shall the cause of justice be sullied by unholy vengeance? If the one supreme danger that besets the path of this great movement be that of outrage, and the greatest obstacle in the way of success be the gratification of passionate resentment, why should not policy, prudence, morality, and religion stay the suicidal acts of those who retaliate for the wrongs inflicted upon injured men? If Irish landlordism finds its only support from public opinion in appearing to be the victim of a people's implacable vengeance, why should its life be prolonged by the excesses of its victims? (Hear, hear.)

This may wear the appearance of preaching to the inherent weaknesses of human nature, a fruitless effort to stay those excesses of passion that are beyond the control of reason and religion, as

their acts are unforeseen and above the power of any influence to arrest. But it is heart-rending to think that, were it not for the excesses of the past year, the cause of justice would by this time have triumphed, and Ireland would stand to-day in the position of a victor in her own cause and that of humanity also. (Cheers.) Had the promptings of revenge not frustrated the plans of the Land League, Irish landlordism could no more have withstood the forces that our plan of action had arrayed against it than could a rotten bulk, rigged with matchbox spars and tissue-paper sails, bear up against the fury of an equinoctial gale. (Cheers.) As for the other class of outrages that have stained the record of our country during the same period, no language is sufficiently strong with which to reprobate and condemn them. As in those above alluded to, comparison with similar classes of crime in this and other countries is of no avail to avert the stigma which their commission fixes upon our peasantry. As to the individuals who perpetrate these horrible brutalities, whether actuated by the incomprehensible motive that could prompt a tenant farmer to perform them, or by the worst design that would incite the degraded instruments of Irish landlordism to their perpetration for the purpose of bringing odium upon the cause of Irish Land Reform, no difference of opinion can exist in Ireland or England as to the punishment which such crimes deserve. The wretch who is capable of such monstrous barbarity towards a dumb and inoffensive beast, places himself beyond the pale of human sympathy, and merits being branded with some indelible mark of popular execration, that should point him out for ever to his fellow-man as infamous and detestable.

And now, one word more before I conclude. Amidst all the troubles of the present movement, and in face of the opprobrium that has been heaped upon Ireland by its enemies in this country, there have not been wanting generous and justice-loving Englishmen who could brave the storm of popular prejudice in defence of the cause of the Land League and its leaders. (Cheers.) What Irishman's heart would refuse to beat with the warmest throbbings of gratitude at the name of honest Joe Cowen? (Loud cheers.) Or who among us could read the declaration of Mr Storey—(cheers)—in the House of Commons, on Friday night, unmoved, when he asserted that if twenty English Radicals had seats in that Assembly, the Coercion Bill of last year would never have been passed into law? (Cheers.) When the representative of England's artisan class also declares that the voice of the country is against further coercion for Ireland, and in favour of justice to our people's

cause, can we not see that other Broadhursts—(cheers)—are in the background, and that the tide of popular English feeling is turning in the direction of fearless and unprejudiced equity in the policy of ruling Ireland? (Cheers.) The stand taken during the excited temper of the past fortnight by the *Pall Mall Gazette*, and some few more English journals, to avert an outburst of unjust resentment against us in this country, is worthy of the highest praise for its enlightened and courageous advocacy of dispassionate justice replacing the hereditary policy of coercion for Ireland. Should we not endeavour to multiply such advocates here in England? It is easy of accomplishment. It needs no sacrifice of principle or national aspiration; it calls for nothing but what it is our moral duty to perform, our best policy to pursue. Let outrage cease in Ireland—(cheers)—let no suspicion of sympathy on your part here in England be made to arise at any act, great or small, that seeks justification from past events in the history of our country, and rely upon it that the number of the Cowens, Storeys, Broadhursts, Taylors, Laboucheres—(cheers)—Lawsons, Collings, and Thompsons, will multiply and lend to the cause of Ireland's social and political rights the cause of justice and humanity, the manly advocacy of fearless English minds, and the unstinted sympathy of generous English hearts. (Prolonged cheering.)

*Address delivered in League Hall, St Anne Street, Liverpool,
on Tuesday, 23rd May, 1882.*

THAT the discussion of the Irish question at so critical a stage as that to which it is now advanced is fraught with responsibility to whoever undertakes the task on behalf of the Land League, few will deny. When the Government is believed to be aiming at the prevention of all public discussion in Ireland, and the leaders of the National party are supposed to be at variance upon vital questions of principle and policy, the elements of precaution cannot be eliminated from the duty I am here to perform this evening. Nevertheless, I am of opinion that the time and occasion are opportune for an enunciation of what I believe to be the real objects of this movement, and what I venture to say is asked for and required by the whole Irish race. (Cheers.) I venture to assert that the entire Irish question is not, as a rule, judiciously presented to public opinion by many who undertake to define its true character outside of Ireland; and it may also be said against us that we have hitherto been wanting in practical statesmanship by insisting upon heroic remedies for Ireland's social and political wrongs, without pointing out, clearly and candidly, how those remedies could be applied. We have left an impression upon the public mind of this country that an ulterior object lies behind the social reform movement which we have initiated. Doubts are expressed by even friendly Englishmen as to whether the Land League is aiming at the abolition of landlordism or at something else. We are charged with raising the cry of "The Land for the people," and not defining its meaning; of demanding the expropriation of the Irish landlords, and falling shy of the question of compensation. My efforts this evening shall be directed to the removal of these doubts by presenting, as well as limited time and limited ability will permit, the Irish question in its entirety, as well as the solution which I believe the whole Irish race demand, and which wise and practical English statesmanship can safely and with credit to itself undertake to concede. (Cheers.)

Ere endeavouring to do this, I think it of the first importance to give a bird's-eye view of the situation in Ireland, in order that Englishmen may the better understand the motives which have actuated the Land Leaguers, and more calmly discuss the means

whereby that situation can be changed with profit to Ireland and safety to British interests.

That the disturbed state of public order in Ireland during the past two years is not due to accident, few Englishmen will deny; that it is the logical outcome of short-sighted English statesmanship most public men in this country are now beginning to admit. It will require very little reasoning to convince practical-minded Englishmen that fires are not lit by spontaneous ignition, or great movements started without a basis of solid justification. What has been the general character of English rule in Ireland, looked at from an impartial point of view? That it has not been of a nature to win the people of Ireland to an abandonment of Irish institutions and aspirations, to the acceptance of those of their rulers, seven centuries of a struggle proclaim and the present condition of our country confirms. (Hear, hear.) No power on earth claiming to assert its authority over a people of another race can justify a rule whereby all the motives that have the greatest influence over that people's existence are stupidly ignored or wantonly trampled upon. (Cheers.) The motives which form the distinctive characteristics of the Irish people are, and always have been, enthusiastic devotion to their religious convictions, unflinching loyalty to the principle of nationality, and a passionate attachment to the soil of their fatherland. Is not the history of England's rule in Ireland a heart-breaking record of systematic oppression upon each and all of these inherent principles of Irish character? It is only within the present generation that a full concession of justice has been made to the first of the motives I have indicated, and that the Irish people have been accorded religious liberty. Was it an unjust concession? Has it been followed by consequences that can cause Englishmen to regret having made it? This, however, is finally settled, and Irish Catholics and Irish Protestants are now upon equal footings of religious freedom; and I am sure that neither Irishmen nor Englishmen will ever again pit one faith against another for political motives. The two remaining principles of Irish national character are at this moment contending against the very policy which denied Catholic emancipation until 1829, and withheld religious equality from the Irish people until our own days. Can these principles be stamped out? Will such policy succeed? These are questions which I am anxious to place before English public opinion at a time when, to borrow an expression of Mr Gladstone's, the English mind "is open" upon them.

Let us now see what are the grounds upon which these prin-

ciples rest a claim for concessions of justice, and what are the forces arrayed behind them for their vindication. That Ireland has a just right to self-government no one can deny—(cheers)—that our people are unanimous in demanding it is apparent from Irish representative opinion and the admissions of the public press outside of Ireland. That self-government can be enjoyed by English dependencies, consistent with the integrity of the British Empire, an independent Irish Parliament ninety years ago, and Canadian and Australian Legislatures existing at the present hour, plainly demonstrate. (Hear.) That the Act of Union was an infamous transaction and has proved a complete failure, English modern history itself concedes. (Loud cheers.) That Dublin Castle rule—(groans)—is one of the primary factors in the present discontent of Ireland, and has ever been a source of the keenest exasperation to our people, is now beginning to be made clear in this country. Upon these grounds, which no one can deny to be just ones, or can consistently refuse to discuss, we rest our claim for political autonomy. (Great cheering.) The grounds upon which we claim a settlement of the Land question are, if possible, more just, more urgent and imperious, than those advanced in behalf of the national question. That Irish landlordism has broken down—that it is discredited and repudiated by our people more thoroughly than any other system that has ever fallen before a nation's resolve and the march of progressive ideas—the present situation in Ireland declares in unmistakable language. That it has been a ruin and a curse to our people, no sane mind will gainsay. (Hear, hear.) Three millions of a population driven from a country in one generation—"Shame"—from a land capable of supporting more than twice its present population—the prevalence of widespread poverty among the unexterminated remainder—increasing disaffection among the masses, consequent upon ruinous exactions and the exercise of social tyranny by the landlords—a reign of terror and violence, giving birth to horrible crimes by calling forth heated and vindictive passions—all threatening a complete social disruption of the country, and all apparently, to the Irish people, sanctioned by English public opinion, and intensified by the blind and vindictive policy of one who had been a popular English statesman ere he left Bradford for Dublin Castle—(loud groans)—this is our justification for demanding the abolition of landlordism and the substitution of a national system in its place.

I shall now point out the forces that are arrayed behind these two principles of social and political reform, in order that the

expediency of dealing justly and promptly with them—as formerly with that of religious equality—may be seen by practical English minds. That there is a new spirit abroad in Ireland—intelligent, resolute, and practical—has been borne testimony to everywhere. (Loud cheers.) That such a spirit might by despair or by desperate men be turned into complete subversary action, the history of the French Revolution declares. It was not dreamy speculations upon the origin of society which sent the frenzy of madness through a people's mind. It was the squalor of the ragged peasant in contrast with the luxury and effeminate splendour of the privileged class; the pallid faces and wasted forms of the peasantry who prowled hungry and fever-stricken through the land; the hopeless, helpless degradation of the mass of the French people spurned and ignored by the Government of the day. This was the bitter writing that was traced in characters of maddening portent which the multitude read with flaming eyes, and sprang wildly to their feet to revenge and efface. (Cheers.)

That such a spirit should be driven to such deeds in Ireland, God forbid—but that such a spirit is abroad, and can be arrested by just and timely concession, I fearlessly proclaim here to-night. (Cheers.) The force that can guide that spirit to safe and moral action, that can shape its ends to beneficial work for Ireland, or that, by letting it drift into headlong passion by simply abandoning it to itself, would be then unable to restrain its excesses, should be one that ought to command the careful consideration of English public opinion. That force consists in the character of the men who are now the leaders of the Irish people. From Mr Parnell—(loud cheers)—downwards, they are nearly all young men, with full twenty years of political life before them. If they have succeeded in doing so much during the past three years, what are they capable of accomplishing in the next twenty. (Loud cheers.) They have given proof of ability, courage, self-devotion, and energy, both outside and inside of Parliament, unparalleled in any previous agitation or reform movement. They stand pledged to the Irish people to work out the social and political regeneration of their country, and I know them too well to believe that calumny, coercion, or imprisonment will ever make them abandon—(cheers)—what every rational mind must admit to be a just, a moral, and a winning cause. (Loud cheers.)

This is something like an outline of the general situation upon the Anglo-Irish difficulty at present; but there is a more particular or immediate aspect of it, which I will endeavour to bring before Englishmen. Upon what is the English Parliament now

engaged? Ireland, almost exclusively—to the almost total neglect of the general business of the empire. The Arrears Bill, while being good in its way, and calculated to arrest crime and outrage to some extent, is a most convincing argument that the Land Act is a failure, and leaves the agrarian war almost where it has hitherto been. In no part of Ireland is the Land Act considered so much of a failure as in Ulster, where leaseholders and every other class of tenants are burdened with rents that were fixed when prices were high and competition from outside unthought of. In my travels through the West and North, recently, I found everywhere a want of confidence in the Land Courts, and heard from all classes that the landlords, as in every other branch of Irish administration, had succeeded in turning these courts to their own purposes in all but a few instances. (Hear, hear, and hisses.) While travelling in the West of Galway I found a state of affairs that have recently been brought before the public by an English correspondent. Evictions are taking place in hundreds, when, on the admission of the authorities that carry them out, the household belongings of 130 families were not worth a single pound all together. I found that a rent of from 15s to £1 per acre is demanded for patches of a stony mountain side, from which it is impossible to extract sufficient food for a year for those who till them. These rents and accumulated arrears are now demanded, when almost every source from which they were paid in the past have ceased to supply them—kelp-burning, fisheries, turf-selling, and remittances from friends in America and England. The soil of Carroroe can no more produce rent than can oranges be made to grow upon the Liverpool race-course—(laughter)—yet, in defiance of all theories upon rent for land, people are evicted for the non-payment of unjust and impossible rent.

But my object is not to dwell upon scenes of misery to-night. I am anxious to point out how misery, discontent, and crime can be banished from Ireland entirely; and I will therefore proceed with my bird's-eye view of the present situation. There is but one more feature in that situation which I wish to dwell upon before discussing the remedy for the Anglo-Irish difficulty, and it is this:—Mr Gladstone, speaking in the House of Commons the other night, proudly termed that assembly "The Temple of Liberty." From an English point of view, this may or may not be a true name for England's Parliament; but from an Irish point of view, there can be no difference of opinion on that point at the present hour. (Applause.) This "Temple of Liberty" is asked by the greatest of living statesmen to strike at every single prin-

ciple that constitutes liberty in any land or among any people. (Hear, hear.) Trial by jury is called the palladium of liberty in every constitutionally governed country as well as in England; yet Mr Gladstone is about to abolish trial by jury in Ireland for three years. (Groans.) The right of public meeting is one of the most cherished privileges of a free people; yet Mr Gladstone is about to make public meeting in Ireland dependent upon the will of a single English functionary. The liberty of the press is prized by every civilised nation as the greatest safeguard of its liberty; yet Mr Gladstone is resolved upon gagging the Irish press. (Groans.) The inviolability of domestic privacy is one of the proudest boasts of Englishmen; yet Mr Gladstone is about to empower an Irish policeman to intrude upon any Irishman's home at any hour of the night he may please to consider it the object of suspicion. (Cries of "Shame.") Verily, this "Temple of Liberty" is at present occupied with anything but a creditable or congenial task.

Having now defined the real nature of the situation, and looking upon the present lull in the Land League movement as a temporary cessation of hostilities during which a parley can be made, I will endeavour to point out the way in which unprejudiced minds on both sides of the Irish Sea can discuss the terms of peace, and end the agrarian war in Ireland for ever. I am about to undertake a task that should have been performed long ago—that is, the definition of "The Land for the people," the charter of the Land League, and the bugbear of the landlords and Conservative organs. (Cheers.) In doing this, I will lay myself open to the suspicion of differing from Mr Parnell and most of my colleagues in the Land League movement; but the fact is, there is not a particle more of difference of opinion between the member for Cork and myself upon this question, than there was when we first stood together upon a public platform in Westport, three years ago. (Loud and prolonged cheering.) Mr Parnell advocates peasant proprietary; I am in favour of the land becoming the national property of Ireland. If peasant proprietary is conceded, either by Lord Salisbury, when he gets into power, or by Mr Gladstone ere he gets out—(hisses)—I am perfectly satisfied that the purchase-money that must be advanced by the State for carrying out such a scheme will become the title-deed of the State to the land of Ireland, and that the nationalisation of the land will be the consequence. Believing this to be inevitable from the growing poverty of Irish agriculture, I am almost indifferent as to whether Mr Parnell's plan or my own be adopted; but as I

was the first to raise the cry of "The Land for the people," I think the time has now come for giving a clear definition of what I mean and propose. (Applause.)

The following statistics will be given only as an approximation to the actual figures, because I have been compelled to borrow them from my "Jail Journal," and I have not had time since my release from prison to compare them with later official returns:—Putting the average annual value of all the cereal produce of Ireland at £30,000,000, and annual produce of live stock wealth at say half the total return for any given year, we will have about an equal sum of £30,000,000. This will give, say, £60,000,000 as the total annual produce of the land of Ireland. Assuming the present annual rental of the land to be £15,000,000, we have thus one-fourth of the gross produce, or 25 per cent. of the annual wealth of the country seized upon by the Irish landlords. Twenty pounds out of every one hundred that is earned by the labour and enterprise of our entire agricultural class is claimed by a small number of persons who contribute nothing whatever to its production, and who cap the climax of this annual confiscation by taking most of this money out of the country which produced it, and spend it to the benefit of other lands and peoples than ours. (Hisses.) I maintain that rent for land that is cultivated by labour alone—or by the joint agencies of capital and labour—independent of landlord assistance, risk, or superintendence, is an unjust and indefensible tax upon a country's industry, that can be more truly described as legal theft than by the conventional terms that designate it a tribute legally due to the prescriptive rights of an unjustly privileged class. If the land became national property—landlordism being abolished, and full State protection and encouragement given to the produce of industry and capital—it would be no exaggerated estimate to put down the yearly value of cereal wealth at double the present amount—that is, £60,000,000. Adding to this the former estimate of yearly live stock wealth, we would have a total of £90,000,000 annually from the land of Ireland. Allowing 10 per cent. off this for diminution of prices, consequent upon increased production, we would still have £20,000,000 more wealth from the soil every year than we have now under the existing state of things. (Hear, hear.) Instead of charging this yearly cereal and live stock wealth with a 20 per cent. rent to the landlords, it would only be taxed, under the national land system, in proportion to the amount of money required for the civil government of the country—administration of law, police, education, hospitals, poor-rate, water-rates, or the

various public purposes for which special taxes are now levied upon the country, and duties placed upon the food and comforts of the people.

To see what such a tax would amount to ordinarily, and thereby determine the difference between the rent now paid to the landlord, and the land tax that would then have to be paid to the State, it will be necessary to make an estimate of the probable annual public expenditure of Ireland. We will put down the cost of civil administration, including payment of police, at £4,000,000; education, £1,500,000; poor-rate, £1,000,000; total local rates, £2,000,000; borough and water-rates, £1,000,000—giving in all a total of £9,500,000 annual outlay in carrying on the national business of the country. In order to meet this yearly public charge without levying a penny of it upon the non-agricultural classes—that is, exempting all classes from both the direct and indirect taxation that is now imposed for Imperial and local government purposes—we should only have to abolish landlordism and rent for land, and place such a tax upon all land values as would meet the public expenditure, as just specified. (Hear, hear.) Ten per cent. on the gross annual agricultural produce of Ireland—or half what is now paid to the landlords in rent and lost to the country—would, under the national land system, carry on the civil government of Ireland, save the tenant farmer half of what he now pays in rent, remove all the taxes that now fall upon the mercantile, commercial, professional, and industrial classes, and take off those duties from the commodities of daily life that burden the lives of the artisan and labouring classes, and deprive the masses of healthy and sufficient food. (Applause.) The State would simply be the steward of the national property. For the use of that property, and the protection that would be given to the farmers and labourers who worked it from the confiscation of their interest in the same, a tax of say 10 per cent. upon the estimated annual produce would be levied. This tax, instead of going into the pockets of an idle class, and being lost to the country, would be expended in the interests of the country, and would augment the national prosperity. The farmer would have absolute security of tenure from the State, subject to the payment of this nominal tax, while the property which his capital and industry would create in the land which he cultivated would be, his, to dispose of when he pleased, as tenant-right is now sold or disposed of when farmers so desire. Such tenant-right or property created in the soil by improvements not to be interfered with or taken by the State without a full equivalent

compensation being given in return by the same; agricultural labourers to be secured the occupancy of such plots of land by the State as would be sufficient to supply themselves with the independency and comforts that are claimed for them under the peasant proprietary plan; the professional and trading classes would be exempt from direct taxes; the great industrial and labouring classes would be freed from all the tribute that is now levied upon their earnings in the shape of borough and county rates; while those duties, which place nearly all the comforts and luxuries of life beyond the reach of the poorer industrial orders, could be entirely removed to the direct gain of the whole community. (Hear, hear.) Thus, the non-agricultural classes would receive a dividend out of the annual produce of the land, equivalent to what they now pay out of their earnings for the carrying on of the general and local government of the country, the education of the people, and the support of the destitute and infirm; while the farmers would possess all the security that a peasant proprietary could offer without having to provide the purchase-money which such a scheme would require them to pay for the fee simple of the land. They, like the rest of the community, would also be free from the taxes, rates, and duties upon articles of consumption that now fall upon the public generally. (Cheers.) This is what I mean by "The Land for the people." (Loud applause.)

The questions that will at once be addressed to the proposer of such a scheme of social reform will be—1st, Upon what grounds can the land be resumed as the property of the State? 2nd, Would such a land system be the best for society and the interests of good government? 3rd, Is it feasible? and what compensation, if any, are the landlords to receive for the expropriation of the property which they claim to have in the soil? I will endeavour to answer those objections in the order in which I have put them. To make the land of Ireland, or of any country, national property, would simply be the resumption of that State ownership of the soil which obtained amongst all nations anterior to the system of land monopoly which class government has established for the aggrandisement of a privileged section in society. This system of land monopoly having failed completely as a land code, as is evidenced in social discontent, prevalence of poverty, and non-fulfilment of the obligations upon the performance of which it could alone rest a claim for existence, it becomes both the duty and the right of the State to call upon "the unjust steward to give an account of his stewardship, for he can now be steward no longer." (Loud and prolonged cheering.) To permit a class to

hold the land of a country as its absolute property involves the giving of an influence over the lives, happiness, and industry of the people of that country inconsistent with the freedom and welfare of mankind, the maintaining of which should be the primary object of every people. The right of all men to participate in the benefits of the soil by the State ownership thereof can be claimed from the fact that land is a natural agent, and that the value of land arises from, and is maintained by, the aggregation of population and the exercise of industry by a people. (Cheers.) The value thus imparted belongs to the people, and not to an individual or a class. That a national land system would be the best for society and good government is self-evident. (Hear, hear.) By insuring a more equal distribution of wealth, increasing the productiveness of the soil through the breaking up of large estates, and giving a stimulus to agricultural industry, poverty would be diminished, and crime deprived of most of the incentives to its commission; while Government would have on its side the Conservatism that would not fail to result from the removal of all grounds for agrarian crime and social discontent through a just and final settlement of a burning question. (Applause.)

The feasibility of such a settlement will be best evidenced by grappling at once with the chief difficulty in the way of any scheme of Land Reform that aims at the abolition of landlordism. (Hear, hear.) I will endeavour to show how this difficulty can be successfully met. The question of compensation is practically the only one now left to discuss in connection with the fate of Irish landlordism. I start with the proposition that, in accordance with strict justice, the landlords of Ireland are not entitled to their fares from Kingston to Holyhead—(loud and prolonged applause)—for the loss of their criminally-abused proprietary rights; but, as conventional justice or the claims of prescriptive right cannot possibly be repudiated by the English Government, or avoided by Ireland, if a peaceful settlement of the land war is to be arrived at, we must face the question of compensation. (Hear, hear.) Well, according to even conventional or political justice, those who, by their enterprise and labour, have given the present value to the land of Ireland, are surely entitled to their share of its market price—(hear, hear)—in other words, the farmer's property in the soil which he alone has improved by his industry and capital, must be equal in value to that claimed by the landlord in virtue of either purchase or prescriptive right. Leaving this property to the farmer, we will only have to deal with the landlord's share. To determine this, it would be neces-

sary to arrive at an estimate of the intrinsic worth of the land anterior to the increment of its value by the present generation. In the time of Dean Swift, the annual rental of Ireland was but £2,000,000. To-day it is about £15,000,000. Will any one, conversant with the history of Irish landlordism since that date, hesitate to say whether this increased value is due to the landlords or to the people of Ireland. Taking the farmers' and the landlords' interest to be equal, the latter's share of the market price of the land of Ireland now would be twenty years' purchase of half the present annual rental, or £1,400,000,000. This sum I would propose to raise by either public loan or the issue of Government bonds bearing 3 per cent. interest, principal and interest to be chargeable to Ireland's contribution to the Imperial revenue. Thus: Annual revenue of Ireland, say £7,000,000; interest on £140,000,000 at 3 per cent. per annum, £4,200,000; leaving annual balance of £2,800,000 for sinking fund with which to pay off the principal. This it will do in a period of about fifty years—the land tax of, say, 10 per cent. upon all land values supplying the expenditure of civil administration now met by such revenue. By this plan of settlement Ireland itself would get rid of landlordism without touching the pockets of the English taxpayer; a compensation would be given to the landlords to which, in strict justice, they are not entitled—(hear, hear)—all incentives to social discontent would be removed; agrarian outrage would of necessity disappear from the absence of landlord tyranny and conflicting agrarian interests; while the whole country would not fail to commence a new life of peace, contentment, and prosperity. (Loud cheers.)

To this plan of settlement, even if granted to be feasible, there will be two objections made, representing both extremes of the Anglo-Irish difficulty. The English Government may say that the people of Ireland would refuse to pay a land tax for the support of alien rule—that similar difficulties would arise in the collection of such a tax as are now encountered in the exaction of rent. I will dispose of these objections before discussing the more serious one that will be offered from the other extreme. There could be no more difficulty in collecting such a tax than has to be met in collecting the ordinary direct revenue of the country at present. The fact that a land tax that would probably never exceed half the amount that is now paid in rent was to be expended for the good of the country, and would constitute the farmers' title to security in his holding, would make such an annual tribute a willing contribution. His property in the soil

would also be a reliable security against repudiation of fiscal obligation.

The other objection is a more serious one than that just answered, as it will stand upon the strong ground of Irish national sentiment, and appeal to the fears which jealously guard the highest aspirations of our race. To propose that the English Government should become the owner, steward, or guardian of the soil of Ireland, will, at first sight, appear an anti-national settlement of the land question, and one which involves a principle of renunciation that cannot be sanctioned by Irishmen who belong to the extreme or Nationalist party. I am convinced, however, that a calm consideration of the question will dissipate the idea that the nationalisation of the land of Ireland is any more of a recognition of England's right to rule us than is involved in the payment of taxes or in calling upon its Government to advance the necessary funds for the carrying out of a scheme of peasant proprietary. (Applause.) While I yield to no Irishman alive in my allegiance to the principle of Ireland's right to govern itself—(applause)—I would infinitely prefer to deal directly with an English Government than with its exacting and unscrupulous mercenaries—the Irish landlords. (Hear, hear, and applause.) Better to have the land of our country administered by even Executive English authority, than see it made the instrument of social slavery and degradation—of tyranny and exaction—by the merciless and polluted hands of Irish landlordism. (Loud cheers.)

There is, of course, the probability that such a land code would appeal to the Conservative instincts of an agricultural people, and cause them to look with favour upon and pay with allegiance the power that would secure them in the enjoyment of social peace and prosperity. This result may be reasonably expected from any settlement of the land question whatever that may be won from the Government of England, as the great majority of mankind are rationally actuated by that excusable selfishness which impels them, as in the ordinary affairs of business life, to seek the best bargain from society in the matter of human comfort and security. (Hear, hear.) When contending forces are aiming for the approval and support of the people who are to be benefited by the outcome of the contest, it is only natural to expect that whoever gives to or secures most for the people will gain most in their regard. Admitting, what no one can deny, that England must be a factor in any settlement of the land question that takes place, so long as England's authority is dominant in Ireland, the selection of land systems must be

determined by their relative merits as such, and their respective adaptability to the genius and requirements of our people. I contend, therefore, that the nationalisation of the land under the existing political relationship of the two countries would be no more of an abandonment of national right or national honour than is involved in any transaction of the every-day political life of our country; while I claim for such a settlement more solid social advantages, both for agricultural and non-agricultural classes alike, than can be obtained under an improvement of the existing system, or by the substitution of a peasant proprietary. (Loud cheers.)

But my proposal or plan of pacification does not rest here; the social difficulty is not the only factor in the Anglo-Irish question. An older difficulty and equally disturbing element in the politico-social life of our country is its present system of government. That Dublin Castle rule—(hisses)—is as monstrous a failure as Irish landlordism, is a proposition which few will be found courageous enough to deny. (Cheers.) It is simply a systematised rule of national exasperation; a mode of administration as little understood by the English people, and as unrepresentative of constitutional government, as if the ill-omened edifice that stands upon Cork Hill were situated on the banks of Yang-tse-Kiang, instead of being within a few hours' sail of Liverpool. (Loud cheers.) It is at last becoming as evident to enlightened English opinion that Ireland must be granted some form of self-government, as that Irish landlordism is repudiated by our people and has proved a complete and disastrous failure. It is no extravagant proposition, therefore, to couple the settlement of the national with that of the land question, and to insist that rational demands upon both must be considered by English public opinion. The present is the most opportune time that has presented itself for the solution of the Anglo-Irish difficulty since the passage of the Act of Union, and the only effectual remedy, in my opinion, is self-government for Ireland and the nationalisation of the land under the administration of an Irish Parliament. (Loud cheers.)

That this will be considered an extreme programme by most of the English press I am prepared to admit; but I am confident that, if Englishmen will approach the discussion of it with calm and unprejudiced minds, it will be found to contain the basis upon which Ireland's peace and happiness may be built with safety and credit to the enlightened statesmanship that may have courage and foresight enough to offer timely justice to a people who

are no longer a power to be despised or a nation willing to submit to continued insult and injustice. (Loud and prolonged cheers.) I would ask Englishmen to remember that there is not a single newspaper in England, or scarcely a public man representing English public feeling, that does not now admit that England's rule of Ireland has been unjust, illogical, and indefensible in the past. (Cheers.) What has convinced them of this? Movements like that which the Government is now desirous of suppressing—men who are now undergoing the same punishment and encountering the same calumny and abuse that were heaped upon Irish public men connected with former agitations. Time will again vindicate the course I am advocating here to-night, and show that the Land League leaders, who are now stigmatised in every possible language of abuse and misrepresentation, are advocating the true remedy for admitted wrongs, and pointing out the means by which that remedy can be applied, and which, if rejected, as other remedies have been rejected in the past, an English generation will yet live to mourn and deplore. (Loud cheering.)

I have now defined what I mean by "The Land for the people." I have endeavoured to point out how that can be accomplished without drawing upon the pockets of Englishmen, and with a certainty of ending the agrarian war in Ireland. (Hear, hear.) I have promulgated my full programme, and I have only to say that from this night forth, so long as I have life to devote to the cause of Ireland, that life shall be devoted to furthering this programme in the interests of my countrymen. (Applause.) I have only to ask from the Irishmen and Irish ladies of Liverpool that sympathetic assistance and consideration which has already been extended to that movement which I had a hand in initiating. (Applause.) I cannot conclude my speech here this evening without tendering, as an Irishman and Land Leaguer, my thanks to the Irish ladies of Liverpool for their magnificent assistance to the people of Ireland during the recent crisis, and I cannot at the same time sit down without giving expression to my pride of living in an age when the women of Ireland, not only in Ireland, but in England and America, have been aroused to show that patriotism and courage which once characterised our countrywomen on the walls of Limerick. (Loud and prolonged cheering, the entire audience rising and waving their hats and handkerchiefs.)

**END OF
TITLE**